

Calendar No. 114

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 216

Encouraging women's political participation in Saudi Arabia.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 23, 2011

Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Mr. DEMINT, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. COONS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

JULY 27, 2011

Reported by Mr. KERRY, with an amendment and an amendment to the preamble

[Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[Strike the preamble and insert the part printed in *italic*]

RESOLUTION

Encouraging women's political participation in Saudi Arabia.

Whereas, on September 22, 2011, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is scheduled to hold its first nationwide municipal elections since 2005, with voter registration open as of April 23, 2011;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia has announced—as it did in 2005—that women will be unable to run for elective office or vote;

Whereas, on March 28, 2011, president of the general committee for the election of municipal council members Abd al-Rahman Dahmash stated, “We are not prepared for the participation of women in the municipal elections now.”;

Whereas Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Saud Al Faisal stated in an interview after the 2005 election that he assumed women would be allowed to vote in future elections, and that this would benefit the election process because women were “more sensible voters than men”;

Whereas the decision by the Government of Saudi Arabia to continue to disenfranchise women in the September 2011 municipal elections is inconsistent with a series of commitments made by the Government of Saudi Arabia;

Whereas, in January 2003, Saudi Arabia proposed to the League of Arab States the “Covenant for Arab Reform,” resulting in the adoption of the “Tunis Declaration” at the May 2004 Arab Summit, which declared, among other things, a “firm determination” to “pursue reform and modernization” by “widening women’s participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields”;

Whereas these declarations were reaffirmed at the Arab Summit in Algiers on March 23, 2005, and at the Riyadh Summit held in Saudi Arabia on March 28, 2007;

Whereas, in April 2009, Saudi Arabia ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which states in article 24(3), “Every citizen has the right : : : to stand for election or choose his representatives in free and impartial elections, in conditions of equality among all citizens that guarantee the free expression of his will.”;

Whereas, on June 10, 2009, the Government of Saudi Arabia accepted the majority of the recommendations put forward by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review including to "[a]bolish all legislation, measures and practices that discriminate against women . . . In particular, to abolish legislation and practices which prevent women from participating fully in society on an equal basis with men," and to "end the strict system of male guardianship and give full legal identity to Saudi women";

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia has indicated that it is supportive of the human rights of women;

Whereas, in November 2010, Saudi Arabia was elected to the Executive Board of UN Women, emphasizing the commitment of the Government of Saudi Arabia to the rights of women;

Whereas 'Abd al-Rahman Dahmash, the president of the general committee for the election of municipal council members, has stated that Saudi women will be granted the right to vote in the next municipal elections scheduled to be held in 2015; and

Whereas, while the United States Government acknowledges the deep cultural and religious traditions and sentiments within Saudi society, without the right to vote on par with men, women in Saudi Arabia are denied not only a fundamental human right but also the ability to contribute fully to the economic development, modernization, and prosperity of their own country. Now, therefore, be it

Whereas, on September 29, 2011, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is scheduled to hold its first nationwide municipal elections since 2005;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia has announced—as it did in 2005—that women will be unable to run for elective office or vote;

Whereas, on March 28, 2011, president of the general committee for the election of municipal council members ‘Abd al-Rahman Dahmash stated, “We are not prepared for the participation of women in the municipal elections now.”;

Whereas the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud Al Faisal, stated in an interview after the 2005 election that he assumed women would be allowed to vote in future elections, and that this would benefit the election process because women were “more sensible voters than men”;

Whereas, on June 6, 2011, the Majlis Al-Shura Consultative Council adopted a resolution recommending that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Rural and Municipal Affairs take the necessary measures to include female voters in future municipal elections;

Whereas the decision by the Government of Saudi Arabia to continue to disenfranchise women in the September 2011 municipal elections is inconsistent with a series of commitments made by the Government of Saudi Arabia;

Whereas, in January 2003, Saudi Arabia proposed to the League of Arab States the “Covenant for Arab Reform,” resulting in the adoption of the “Tunis Declaration” at the May 2004 Arab Summit, which declared, among other things, a “firm determination” to “pursue reform and modernization” by “widening women’s participation in

the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields”;

Whereas these declarations were reaffirmed at the Arab Summit in Algiers on March 23, 2005, and at the Riyadh Summit held in Saudi Arabia on March 28, 2007;

Whereas, in April 2009, Saudi Arabia ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which states in article 24(3), “Every citizen has the right. . . to stand for election or choose his representatives in free and impartial elections, in conditions of equality among all citizens that guarantee the free expression of his will.”;

Whereas, on June 10, 2009, the Government of Saudi Arabia accepted the majority of the recommendations put forward by the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review including to “[a]bolish all legislation, measures and practices that discriminate against women. . . In particular, to abolish legislation and practices which prevent women from participating fully in society on an equal basis with men,” and to “end the strict system of male guardianship and give full legal identity to Saudi women”;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia has indicated that it is supportive of the human rights of women;

Whereas, in November 2010, Saudi Arabia was elected to the Executive Board of UN Women, emphasizing the commitment of the Government of Saudi Arabia to the rights of women;

Whereas ‘Abd al-Rahman Dahmash, the president of the general committee for the election of municipal council members, has stated that Saudi women will be granted the

right to vote in the next municipal elections scheduled to be held in 2015; and

Whereas, while the United States Government acknowledges the deep cultural and religious traditions and sentiments within Saudi society, without the right to vote on par with men, women in Saudi Arabia are denied not only a fundamental human right but also the ability to contribute fully to the economic development, modernization, and prosperity of their own country: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved, That the Senate—*

2 (1) ~~calls on the Government of Saudi Arabia to~~
3 ~~allow women to participate, both as voters and can-~~
4 ~~didates for elective office, in the September 2011~~
5 ~~elections;~~

6 (2) ~~supports the women of Saudi Arabia as they~~
7 ~~endeavor to exercise their human rights; and~~

8 (3) ~~believes that it is in the interest of Saudi~~
9 ~~Arabia and all nations to permit women to run for~~
10 ~~office and vote in all elections.~~

11 *That the Senate—*

12 (1) *urges the Government of Saudi Arabia to*
13 *allow women to fully participate, both as voters and*
14 *candidates for elective office, in the September 2011*
15 *elections;*

16 (2) *supports the women of Saudi Arabia as they*
17 *endeavor to exercise their human rights and partici-*
18 *pate equally in society; and*

1 (3) *believes that it is in the interest of Saudi*
2 *Arabia and all nations to permit women to run for*
3 *office, receive civic education, and vote in all elec-*
4 *tions.*

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preamble